

*A Guide to Using The*  
**Position Statement on**  
**School–Family–Community Partnerships**  
*in*  
*Early Care and Education Programs*

**A Role for Early Care and Education Programs**

Every early care and education program can develop effective strategies to involve *all* families in the education of their children. Partnerships with parents have been a primary focus of the early care and education field since its inception. However, based on national surveys, families indicate that they would like more information and opportunities to be actively engaged in their child's education. Early care and education programs can offer a comprehensive school-family-community partnership program that makes some connection with all families. Not all families can take advantage of all partnership activities, but every family can be involved in some way. Early care and education programs can provide training and support to staff and administrators in the areas of setting partnership goals and effective practices as well as strategies for monitoring progress to learn which practices are most successful.

Because early childhood educators have a holistic view of young children, they are uniquely positioned to assist families in connecting to resources in the community. To make these connections, early childhood educators can become knowledgeable about community resources by contacting local organizations and state information sources such as Infoline (now available by dialing 211). Finding out about community resources that are available to families is the first step. Bringing the needs of young children and families to the attention of the wider community is the next step. Early childhood educators can be a pivotal force for encouraging community collaborations that support a unified vision of positive development for children.

**Redefinition of the Six Partnership Standards and Sample Activities**

1. **Parenting** – Programs promote and support parenting skills and the family's primary role in encouraging children's learning at each age and stage of development.

Activities may include: providing parent education programs, transportation, family social activities, parent rooms and spaces, on-site internet access for family use, social service referrals, and parent resource libraries; developing parent leadership training and parent support groups; and accompanying parents to the school district's Planning and Placement Team meetings.

2. **Communicating** – Staff and families participate in on-going, clear two-way communication about the program and children's progress.

Activities may include: preparing parent handbooks and newsletters; providing audio/video tapes; maintaining regular communication through phone calls, home visits, daily communication sheets, home-school notebooks, or e-mail; translating all information into parents' languages (if parents speak a language other than English); and conducting parent meetings and conferences.

3. **Volunteering** – programs provide opportunities and appropriate training to involve families in activities both in the program and at home.

Activities may include: encouraging and supporting parents to volunteer to telephone other parents when needed, construct playground equipment, assist in the classroom or library, coordinate other volunteers, assist

in planning activities, act as “buddies” for new parents, raise funds, lobby, and share talents, hobbies and interests with children and other parents.

4. **Learning at home** – programs help families engage in learning activities at home that are coordinated with the goals and objectives of the educational program.

Activities may include: providing book and activity bags to use at home; gathering information about educational activities in the community; including ideas in the newsletter for extending classroom learning at home; loaning parent resource and informational materials; making home visits; creating opportunities for parents to share ideas with other parents; and encouraging parents to be role models for life-long learning.

5. **Decision making** – programs provide opportunities for all families to develop and strengthen their leadership role in program decisions through participation in parent organizations, advisory councils, school boards, or other decision-making committees or groups.

Activities may include: involving parents in curriculum development; inviting parents to staff meetings; including parent participation in staff interviewing committees; supporting parents to advocate for the program with funders or policy-makers; asking parents to represent themselves and others on advisory boards, and providing opportunities for parents to train other parents in leadership skills.

6. **Collaborating with the community** – programs provide coordinated access to community resources for children and families and serve as a resource to the community.

Activities may include: helping parents identify resources and support for child and family needs; collaborating with other health and human service providers; engaging in joint activities with other community organizations such as senior citizen centers; developing a resource directory; linking parents with adult education programs (for high school completion, English for speakers of other languages or job training); providing service to the community for the benefit of others; and working together with community members to create greater access, availability and quality of early childhood programs.

The six standards for school-family-community partnerships are not exclusive or distinct categories. One practice can activate several standards simultaneously. For example, assisting a family and child with the transition to kindergarten can involve giving parents information about their child’s developmental characteristics and appropriate expectations for kindergarten (parenting and communication). The early childhood program can arrange a meeting between the family and kindergarten teacher to assist them in developing a relationship to support the child’s transition into a new environment (collaboration and communication). A parent may help gather together other families whose children are also transitioning to kindergarten to talk with kindergarten teachers about activities families can do at home (volunteering and learning at home). Families who develop leadership skills by serving on committees at the preschool level may be interested in continuing that type of involvement in the public school and may become advocates for education in the community (decision making and collaborating with community).

The six standards for partnerships can guide the development of a balanced, comprehensive program that includes opportunities for involvement at school, at home and in the community. The results will depend on the particular types of involvement that are implemented as well as the quality of the implementation.



Note: Throughout this document the words parent(s) and family(ies) are used in the broadest sense to mean those adults with primary responsibility for children.